

Azrael

Azrael (Biblical Hebrew: עזראל) is an angel in the Abrahamic religions. He is often identified with the Angel of Death of the Hebrew Bible.^{[1]:64–65}

The Hebrew name translates to "Help of God", "Help from God", or "One Whom God Helps".^{[1]:64–65} *Azrael* is the spelling of the *Chambers Dictionary*. The Qur'an refers to a "مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ" (*Malak Al-Mawt* or "Angel of Death") which corresponds with Hebrew term Malach ha-Mawet in Rabbinic Literature. Islamic-Arabic tradition adopts the name, in the Arabic alphabet as ‘Azrā’īl (Arabic: عزرائيل).



Angel of Death by Evelyn De Morgan, 1881

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In Sikhism

References to the angel of death Azrail in Guru Granth Sahib follow: 1)"The angel Ajrail crushes the evil-doers in the crusher like the sesame seed." (Gauri Ki Var M. 4, Shalok M. 5, p. 315) 2) "He, who is dependent on Thee, O Lord! Ajrail is the friend of that person." (Tilang M. 5, p. 724) 3) " The rebels will be called to account; the angel Ajrail will suiround them for punishment." (Ramkali Ki Var M. 3, Shalok M. 1, p. 953) 4) " When the Malik-ul-Maut (the angel of death) will come after breaking all the doors; those dear brothers will bind you and send you for burial... "(Shalok Farid, p. 1383). In Sikhism, Ajrail (Azrail), one of the archangels, is the angel of death. He is called Malik-ul-Maut in Persian. He becomes the guest of everyone on the fixed day and time. He punishes the evil-doers and is a friend of the virtuous, and devotees of the Lord. ^[2]

Background

Depending on the outlook and precepts of various religions in which he is a figure, Azrael may be portrayed as residing in the Third Heaven.^{[1]:288} In one description, he has four faces and four thousand wings, and his whole body consists of eyes and tongues whose number corresponds to the number of people inhabiting the Earth. He will be the last to die, recording and erasing constantly in a large book the names of men at birth and death, respectively.^[3]

In Judaism

In Jewish mysticism, he is commonly referred to as "Azriel" (Biblical Hebrew: עזריאל), not "Azrael". The Zohar, a holy book of the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah, presents a positive depiction of Azriel. He is associated with the South and is considered to be a high-ranking commander of God's angels.

In Christianity

There is no reference to Azrael in the Bible, and he is not regarded as either a canonical or a non-canonical figure in Christianity. However, a story in 2 Esdras (a book not deemed canonical by the Catholic, Protestant and most Orthodox Churches) which is part of the Apocrypha, has the story of a scribe and judge named Ezra (not to be confused with the Biblical figure Ezra), also sometimes written "Azra" in different languages. Azra was visited by the Archangel Uriel and given a list of laws and punishments he was to adhere to and enforce as judge over his people. Azra was later recorded in the Apocrypha as having entered Heaven "without tasting death's taint". Depending on various Christian religious views, it could be taken as Ezra ascending to angelic status. This would add the suffix "el" to his name, which denotes a heavenly being (e.g. Michael, Raphael, Uriel). Hence, it would be Ezrael/Azrael. Later books also state a scribe named Salathiel, who was quoted as saying, "I, Salathiel, who is also Ezra". Again, depending on certain views of Christian spirituality, this could be seen as angelic influence from Ezrael/Azrael on Salathiel.

In Islam

Along with Jibrail, Mīkhā'īl and Isrāfīl, the Angel of Death, called Azrail (عزرائيل) is believed by Muslims to be one of the archangels.^[4] He and his subordinate angels^[5] are responsible for taking the souls of the deceased away from the body.^[6] Azrail does not act independently from God and just takes those who were commanded to be taken. Rather than merely representing an independent personified death, Azrail is described in Islamic sources as subordinate to the will of God "with the most profound reverence".^[7]

Several Muslim traditions recount meetings between the Angel of Death and the prophets, the most famous being a conversation between the Angel of Death and Moses.^[8] In an islamic narration, Idris befriended the angel of death. Idris offered him food, thereupon he revealed him his non-human essence, because as an angel, he does not eat. Later the angel of death showed him the heavens.^[9]

See also

- List of angels in theology
- Death (personification)
- Islamic view of angels
- Punishment of the Grave
- Sariel
- Thanatos, the personification of Death in Greek mythology

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